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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## A SUPERB JAPANESE LACQUER SCREEN.

**J**APANESE lacquer-work, of which an admirable example is given in our illustration, is in this country an unknown art. We know little more about it than that it is prepared from a resin extracted from a certain tree. The gum is soft and transparent when fresh, and turns black and hard on being exposed to the atmosphere. A red lacquer, much used in China, is made from cinnabar. The screen, of which but a single leaf is given in our illustration, was exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1878. In addition to the perfection of its lacquer, it is remarkable for the rare beauty of its decoration with flowers of pure gold, porcelain, and mother-of-pearl in relief. These ornaments are applied with a degree of skill that we look for in vain in the work of other than Oriental artisans, who seem to be all but supernaturally endowed with patience, and who possess a peculiar delicacy of touch which enables them to effect without difficulty what to the heavy-handed Caucasian artisan would be impossible.

## THE ART OF FURNISHING.\*

### III. THE DRAWING-ROOM.

THIS room claims special attention. Here "beauty, sweetness, and light" are to culminate. The purpose of a drawing-room is relaxation and social enjoyment. Other rooms are, so to speak, work-rooms, and take their tone from the necessary pursuits to which they are more or less set apart; but in this room fancy reigns supreme, unfettered by the weightier cares of life. Whatever of poetry, of art, or of culture there is in us will manifest itself in the fittings and accessories of the *withdrawing-room*. And, first, as to the walls.

A similarity between the dining-room and drawing-room should be avoided. As the transition is usually from the one to the other, it is best to seek a pleasing contrast of color. Gray, or white with gray or gold, is of course a safe medium, as it presents no difficulties in the way of after-furnishing; but, at best, it is tame. If the dining-room be red, you may have a cool green tone for the drawing-room; or if the former is green—say, olive or sage—a pale salmon-pink hue would make a good contrast. Or something between harmony and contrast is obtained by opposing olive-green to a pale turquoise or Nile blue. Pale lemon-yellow is another tone that ought to be more frequently used for drawing-rooms. This, or a fuller apricot-yellow, is most effective with black woodwork, and nothing can light up better than the former.

The following table shows a few of the colors that may be safely used for the dining-room and drawing-room, and the relation in which they best accord:

| DINING ROOM                   | DRAWING-ROOM.           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dull red.....                 | Gray blue to turquoise. |
|                               | Pale sage-green.        |
|                               | Salmon-pink.            |
| Dark olive or sage.....       | Pale apricot-yellow.    |
|                               | Turquoise or Nile blue. |
| Dull peacock-blue.....        | Lemon-yellow.           |
|                               | Citrine.                |
| Chocolate or fine browns..... | Pale blues.             |

This employment of varied effects of color throughout a house is strongly advocated, as a vast amount of pleasure and satisfaction will thus be derived. These

contrasts may also be used for the dado and upper wall of the same room.

It should be borne in mind that in speaking of the color of a room it is not necessarily meant that the walls are of one simple tint or wash of color: the pattern and coloring may be complex, and yet there may be one predominating hue which shall give the tone to the room. A well-mixed Indian or Persian carpet will contain an almost endless number of colors, and yet there is often one predominating tint or "bloom," and this effect may be obtained also in wall paper.

It is noticeable that the drawing-room, however other rooms may have escaped, has mostly been the scape-

flowers on walls and carpets; of light, flimsy, ill-constructed chairs and tables that will not fulfil their purpose; and of luxuriously debilitating puffy sofas and chairs which our ancestors would have scorned. At times a chair or sofa of this sort may be a boon, but for every-day use and for long sitting in they are highly objectionable.

As for gilding and plate glass, the essential vulgarity of their immoderate use is fast being perceived. It is hard to understand the preference given to white marble in dwellings. It is cold, and uncongenial to the eye and to the touch; and for furniture, colored marbles would harmonize better.

As a matter of course, in the decoration of the house the drawing-room has frequently come off worst. A favorite wall-paper lately has been a white or gray, plain or watered ground, with a stamped and gilded bunch of flowers, or a huge "fleur-de-lis" at regular intervals, the bunches of flowers presenting no better effect than might have been got with a splash of liquid gold from a brush, directed on the most rudimentary geometric plan. A picture hanging on such a wall generally cuts into three or four of these gilded nose-gays. Of course, with a smaller pattern studded more closely, the effect is not so bad. Another fashion is to divide the walls into panels, with a border, and a gray or other plain tinted margin. There is not much to be said against this plan, except that in rooms of moderate size it destroys the breadth and unity of the whole. It affords, however, the opportunity for a delicate filling or panel, and a border of either a geometric or a conventionally-flowered pattern of any variety of coloring. The dado and upper paper, with or without a frieze above, give the room a continuity which it lacks in the panelled method.

In either case wall accommodation is provided for pictures, though the unbroken length of wall must be acknowledged fittest where a number have to be hung, as it is extremely difficult to arrange odd-sized pictures on walls already cut into square or oblong spaces.

The writer has in mind a drawing-room, the principal walls of which are covered with Italian lake scenery, executed, apparently, in distemper, but, on a closer inspection, they will be found to be covered with ordinary wall-paper, only printed in wider strips, which are arranged horizontally instead of vertically. Imitation Corinthian columns, with arches of masonry springing from their capitals, are made to enclose each scene. The execution is spirited and effective, and probably better than anything of the same kind to be got at the present time. These date thirty or forty years back.

At first sight, however, it is apparent that a room decorated in this way is totally unsuited to pictures; the various pieces of wall are, in fact, themselves so many pictures. There are, it is true, one or two small spaces filled in with a plain gray panel and border, on which a picture or two might be hung, but the effect, beside the larger distempered scenes, would be lost.

The difficulty with a room of this sort is that the furniture necessarily comes into the scheme of the decoration—taking the place of objects in the foreground of a picture—and requires to be arranged with some reference to the laws of perspective, particularly where a piece of furniture actually cuts into one of the scenes. There are other disadvantages, such as the confused background it presents, and the possibility of the pictured landscape (unless really a work of art) becoming wearisome and monotonous.

It is better, as a general principle, to treat a wall as



LEAF OF JAPANESE SCREEN.

BLACK LACQUER WITH FLOWERS OF GOLD, PORCELAIN, AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL IN RELIEF.

goat upon which the sins of taste and fashion have been laid. As regards the hall there has been no need to alter the hard outlines of the accustomed furniture, neither visitors nor owners being wont to rest long there. The dining-room has mainly been let alone, on the ground of long association and the somewhat unalterable nature of its requirements; but the drawing-room (from a perfectly allowable assumption that here taste may be permitted to express itself) is generally the room in which everything irrational and despicable is carefully crowded together. Specially to be condemned is the unthinking use of large masses of gilding and glass and marble; of patchy, realistic bunches of

\* Adapted for American readers from the English work of H. J. Cooper.

a wall, preserving its flatness (or vertical plane), at the same time endeavoring to avoid monotony and crudeness, either of design or color. This is the common-sense as well as the artistic view of the interior decoration of ordinary dwelling-rooms.

Once for all, neither in wall-papers nor carpets should the pattern be made to stand forward (in prominent relief), as if it could be clutched by the hand or caught in the foot. To a trained mind and eye this always occasions a disagreeable sensation, and is, in truth, a want of fitness or propriety in design, the first principle of which is to remember the purpose and position of the thing designed for. Gold is of doubtful service in enhancing the effect of a paper, especially if the design be good. It is, moreover, expensive, and the Dutch metal often used in its place is apt to turn black.

To sum up, a drawing-room should be of medium tint, not dark, but such as will light up well; the walls should be adapted for prints and water-colors rather than oil-paintings; the prevailing hue of the walls should be carefully chosen; and, lastly, the room should present a pleasant contrast to the dining-room.

As to furniture, the drawing-room should be suited as nearly as can be to the varied purposes of recreation, social and intellectual, uniformly associated with its name. People do not want, in the ordinary conversation and desultory employment of this room, to sit up as if they were at a dinner-table, therefore it is useless to have a lot of stiff high chairs. Three or four of a sort will do no harm. Beyond this it is best to vary the seats as much as possible, taking care they are not too high; also that one or two are sufficiently high in the seat for elderly gentlemen, who object to being dropped into a chair from which they find it impossible to lift themselves without assistance. Convenient ottomans in out-of-the-way angles and recesses are of use, as they relieve the centre of the room. The floor of a drawing-room should never be crowded with furniture, and the old-fashioned centre-table is usually much better replaced by the centre ottoman, if there is room for one.

Many prefer not being able to see all over a drawing-room at a glance, and the prettiest room can generally be made out of a somewhat irregular planning of the walls. Sometimes there happens to be a smaller room communicating, which, besides being a convenient addition, gives opportunity for an effective side-view, and relieves the monotony of the four walls, from which there is no escape except by way of the door. It may be snug to have but one outlet to a room, but there is a pleasant sense of freedom in being able to enter at one door and pass out at another; therefore do not be afraid of a house not built quite on the square or four-wall principle, provided the accommodation is in no way interfered with, and valuable space is not sacrificed to picturesque arrangement. As it will happen, however, in the present state of building, that the best one can hope for is to have rooms of fair size and sensibly proportioned, it will be wiser to leave out of the question a prettily-broken form of room and endeavor to do one's best within the four walls usually provided by builders.

The seats in a drawing-room should commence near the wall line, so as to leave as large an area of the floor as possible for after filling up. Chairs ranged round a wall are not elegant, but ottomans, settees, and divans find their places here naturally, and afford a pleasant view of the room, while the intervening furniture helps the sense of distance, and carries the eye gently away to the opposite wall.

All that tends to soften too hard and prominent outlines; all that lends distance to effects that would otherwise be harshly and painfully near; all that gives variety and an indescribable charm to the mind and sense, should be cultivated in the fitting-up of a drawing-room. A dining-room may be set out with as much precision as the aisles and pews of a church. A drawing-room admits of as much freedom of arrangement as you like, under certain graceful restraints. The two rooms certainly differ as widely as a city square differs from a tastefully laid out garden, with natural winding paths threading their way between trees and shrubs and mounds.

The set pieces of furniture in a drawing-room (not the chairs) should be dispersed about the walls, and not crowded at any one part. It will thus be easier to divide attention, and to counteract that centralization of interest which sometimes occurs, and is mostly undesirable. Choose a convenient spot for your pianoforte,

as much in the dark as possible, as it is likely to be an eyesore unless you go to the expense of a specially made case. Then consider the best form of cabinet for your room, and, if possible, plant it at the other end, away from the piano. A moderately-sized writing-table may stand in a recess or window. If in a window, leave room to get round it. One or two small tables about the room are very useful for many purposes besides the "five-o'clock tea." A small cabinet for music will generally fill in somewhere along the wall, and leaves no excuse for music to be scattered about untidily till it is torn or lost.

Avoid rickety tables and flower-stands that are apt to be overturned by the touch of a passing dress. A flower-stand or a fern-case can be made as firmly as necessary, and your friends may be saved the mortification of inadvertently, and through no fault of their own, upsetting a valuable cargo.

If a room seems too long, or you want to break the line somewhere, a low folding screen, with painted or embroidered panels in a light framework (wicker or perforated wood), may be introduced with good effect.

It has been a fashion of late years to fill up the end of a room, or part of one side, sometimes both, with a voluminous arrangement of gilding and plate glass, termed a console glass. Formerly this was supported by a console table with a marble top, but latterly the table has been superseded by a "jardinière" for flowers or ferns, which is also made to do duty as a seat when required, by removing the flowers and substituting a stuffed top or lid. The effect, when filled with flowers, may be pretty, but the plants seem out of place and unnatural, and many persons object to full-length views of themselves at every turn. A cabinet with a central mirror, enough for all purposes of reflection, would be far better. You cannot put much of yourself, except your image, into a sheet of glass, however large, but you can impress a good deal of your character into and upon a cabinet. To begin with, it should be tolerably high, it being a mistake to keep all the pieces of furniture low, as it is impossible to make a picturesque room without some variety of height and diversity of shadow. It requires no stretch of imagination, if you once lay aside preconceived ideas of a certain stereotyped form, to comprehend that a cabinet may be so constructed as to display any ornaments placed upon it to the very best advantage, and this in itself, perhaps, would lead to a more conscientious selection of ornamental gew-gaws than generally prevails, since, in the heterogeneous confusion of Bohemian glass and cheap lacquer, aided by the meretricious reflection of plate glass, it seems to matter little, so long as there is plenty of glitter, by what means it is produced.

Small ornaments should not be displayed near the ground, but on shelves or in cases more on a level with the eye, the larger and more massive pieces being reserved for the lower shelves. Part of the cabinet may be enclosed by a solid paneled door or doors; it is useful, and gives a balance to the whole, or if you want cupboard-room, the lower part may be entirely enclosed. This is a question of convenience. A curtain of velvet or embroidered cloth is sometimes introduced. It is decorative, and it may be considered untidy. This is a question of taste.

The more you can break up a cabinet into an orderly arrangement of parts, scientifically proportioned, the greater will be the pleasure derived from its after contemplation, the task of taking in the whole at a glance will be rendered difficult, if not impossible, and if the recondite nature of the lines is equalled by corresponding subtlety of color, and crowned by a truly artistic arrangement of the contents, you will have a near approach to a perfect drawing-room cabinet.

Every one will not have old or even modern china or Venetian glass with which to decorate a room, but a cabinet may contain books, portfolios, music, trinkets, and portable drawing-room property of various sorts, and yet be an artistic piece of furniture, and much more useful than its more pretentious neighbor. As a rule, silvered glass should occupy some portion of the back; if in small pieces, the edges should be bevelled; in large sizes this is not so imperative.

In a drawing-room cabinet, the outline should be straight lines rather than curves—though an arc or arbitrary curve may sometimes be a relief. There should, however, be some flow of lines, at once graceful and appropriate, within the bounding lines, and the artist may be allowed a wide margin with regard to the internal details. Nevertheless it must be borne in mind

that, in designing furniture of this sort, well-studied proportion is far more than mere linear dexterity.

It might be assumed that such inevitable concomitants of drawing-room furniture as the tables could safely be left with the facile producers of these useful articles; but though the markets are overstocked with fancy tables of various sorts and sizes, many of them must be rejected on the ground of general debility. A table is nothing if not firm, and yet this primary condition is seldom fulfilled. The basis of simple construction is seen in the kitchen table, and with considerable modifications the same formation is applicable to a much higher class of tables. Instead, however, of studying "eternal fitness," the endeavor is made to balance the table on the slenderest possible columns, reduced to a minimum of strength by excessive carving or turning away of the wood where it ought to be left of a fair thickness. From these columns spring elegant carved branches or claws, and for fear so vulgar a thing as a castor should be visible, a hole is sometimes scooped almost through the wood, and a castor (much too small) is inserted. The consequence is, one of the castors soon gives way under the weight of the table, which thus acquires that chronic limp so often observable.

The stand of a table may be made in various ways. The chief point is to get the top supported all round and firmly, so that no ordinary pressure will overturn it. The legs, or stand, should never project beyond the extreme line of the top, and in a writing-table should not be in the way of one's knees.

The legs of a square or oblong table need not necessarily be placed at the extreme corners. If framed a little way in, they will often look better. It is also well to brace them together by some sort of cross-rails near the ground, though this mode of strengthening causes difficulty in packing. It is obvious that whereas a couple of four-legged tables will pack one within the other, the cross rails render this economy of space impossible, and to the cheap furniture-dealer this may be a consideration, independently of the extra expense of the rails themselves. However, the wisdom of allowing such a parsimonious spirit of utility to gain a morbid ascendancy may well be doubted.

Practically, there is a very large proportion of ornamental drawing-room tables at which you dare not sit down to write a letter, or on which you hesitate to place a lamp. In fact, one habitually approaches a certain class of tables with great caution, for fear an accidental touch should communicate a disagreeable tremor throughout the ornaments and knick-knacks placed thereon.

It is beyond the present purpose to attempt to elucidate the practical putting together of tables and chairs, and even were it done, the amateur might find it well-nigh impossible to unravel the mode of construction in the next thing of the kind he came across. If, for instance, you insist upon the cross-rails of a chair or table being mortised right through the upright and pinned on the other side, it would seem as though you had a guarantee of sound workmanship; yet this method of Jacobean framing may be cleverly imitated by a piece glued on to represent the end of the rail coming through, while the hypocritical rail itself is secured by a peg or a nail. It takes a good while to become a tolerable judge of furniture, so that the safest plan is to go to some house of established reputation.

A chimney-glass is, perhaps, the most sensible thing to put over the mantelpiece. It is not easily affected by the dust and smoke from the fire, and being fixed at a good height from the floor, is not open to the objection raised against the console glass. Here, however, there is room for the exercise of ingenuity, in a departure from the mere sheet of plate glass and the substitution of something more varied and effective.

The fireplace, with its projecting breastwork, is a fine basis for the erection of an imposing superstructure. Sometimes the mantel-piece and glass are made as one united whole, the entire structural parts being of wood. Where the mantel-piece exists, it may be cased in with wood, if preferred, and above it you may construct an "over-mantel" of varied parts, light or heavy, with or without shelves, and with the top slightly overhanging, in the form of a cove or arch. Gilding, painting, or simply well-chosen colored fragments of paper, leather, or stuff, will do duty in panelling out the various parts, while a good-sized mirror should occupy the centre. It is to be hoped that the subject of marble mantel-pieces will receive more attention at

the hands of builders, as they are mostly very difficult things to bring into the general scheme of a room.

The important questions of carpeting and curtaining must not be overlooked. A favorite plan, where parquetry is too expensive, is to cover the floor all over with India matting, or plain colored felting, and afterward spread foreign rugs and mats about here and there. This lacks unity, though there is a refreshing coolness about the look of the matting, especially in hot weather. There can, however, be no possible objection to bordering the room with white or colored matting, and laying down a centre carpet. It has a bright and clean appearance, and musical sounds strike clearer and sharper than in a room carpeted all over.

Gaudy, bright-hued carpets are a complete mistake, as are also large, geometric, or spotty patterns. Remember, always, a carpet is a background to all the colors that will be seen against it, and take care that it is subdued in tone, and that the colors are well blended, as by this means they will counteract any too positive predominant hue.

A room is incomplete without curtains; there is always an unfinished look until the hard outline of the windows is broken by the soft folds of drapery, which catch the full force of the light from outside, and disperse it in modified form over the room.

Besides their use in subduing the glare of light, there is, of course, their practical aspect in keeping out draughts, and closing in the room at night, which important functions should have been placed first. Curtains depend for artistic effect mainly on three things—color, texture, and aptitude for falling into soft and graceful folds. Hence, silks, cloths, velvets, and serges are all suitable materials. The highly-glazed chintzes of former days, though admirable in many respects, were ludicrously stiff and angular, and one gladly welcomes, in their place, the soft cretonne cloth, with its wonderful variety of pattern and color. Mixed colors and checkered patterns are less necessary in the curtains than in the walls and carpets; and frequently, after an exhaustive search for a well-designed patterned curtain that will suit a room, one is obliged to fall back on some self-colored stuff, and confess that it answers every purpose. There is, however, no binding rule here, nor need you be in the least averse to a figured material so long as it is not spotty, but what is known as an "all-over," or well-covered pattern, and not too violent in contrasted colors.

The Spanish cross striped materials in brilliant reds and yellows are rather the exception than the normal standard for curtains. There is, in the present day, an overwhelming supply of curtain stuffs of every color and texture, many of which do equal credit to the ceaseless activity of brain and loom, so that one need scarcely point to any in particular; and general principles affecting design in wall-papers and carpets will sufficiently indicate the line to observe in approving or rejecting any pattern. Many people confine themselves to muslin or lace curtains for the drawing-room, but, although this is a fairly passable escape from a difficulty, it cannot be considered more than a temporary measure. Lace curtains behind the heavier stuff curtains give a certain dress and finish to a room, but by themselves they are too weak and transparent.

As to valances, the grandiose bullion fringes with wooden pendants, encased in twisted yellow silk, are generally abominable, yet even these, worked in quiet colors harmonizing with the curtains, and kept to some very simple outline, may look exceedingly well, and by no means barbaric. The simpler and more natural a valance is the better. A light brass pole will always answer the purpose as an ornamental curtain-rod. Cornices require valances, and frequently bring the window into excessive prominence, and detach it from the wall in a manner injurious to the general effect.

A word on window-blinds will not be out of place here. The expedients for screening windows seem to be various, and the window-blind of the day is rapidly superseded by the window-blind of to-morrow. And yet the question may be resolved within very narrow limits. The purpose of a blind is to screen the room from outsiders, and to modify and subdue the light. And these points seem best met by the usual white linen blind, or the Venetian blind formed of parallel laths of wood, which turn on their axes, and admit air and light as required. It is strange that the tints of the Venetian blind have been so few, when by painting the laths a certain tone, a refraction of rays might be obtained, of great benefit to the room in which they fall;

instead of which a powerful green is the usual color adopted, which often completely nullifies the tone of the walls and curtains, and shuts out the light no more effectually than a paler tint would do, seeing that the laths themselves are opaque. However, in the absence of Venetian, the white linen blind is the simplest means of softening the light. All colored blinds, as usually made, are too strong, and overlie everything with their own reflection.

Where low half-blinds are required to windows overlooked from the road, the English wicker-work, plain or gilded, is as inoffensive as anything. All wire or gauze blinds are dismally ugly, and ground glass is office-like and monotonous. A fashion obtains abroad of employing stained glass, set in small cross-bar frames of lead, gilded. The pattern is often a simple rosette and flower alternated, and the effect is good both inside the room and from the street.

And now let the reader take a rapid survey of the drawing-room here theoretically furnished. The door is flung open, and he crosses the cool Chinese matting, and steps upon the velvety pile or Persian carpet. Progress is easily made across the room, or by a circuitous path, skirting divans, easy chairs, and small tables. He sits comfortably on one of the aforesaid lounges, and glances round. The walls, mirrors, seats, and pictures seem to form one continuous, harmonious, though varied, panorama of pleasing forms and colors, mingling and contrasting. The pieces of furniture are not instantly received on the retina of the eye as so many inky blotches on a white wall; but slowly, and as the eye becomes accustomed to the room, one by one the different points come out, and by degrees their various forms and component parts are unfolded. Bits of color, unobserved at first, starlike appear. The curtains also fall into the scheme of the decoration, and merge their individuality for the good of the room.

#### A PAPER HOUSE AND PAPER FURNITURE.

ON a recent visit to the factory of Messrs. William Gibson's Sons, we were surprised to notice a great variety of objects for house-decoration and furniture made from papier-maché. Passing some remarkable paper counterfeits of old armor and obsolete weapons of war, and full-size models of classical antiquities, we came upon a wooden book-case with brown paper mouldings and figures in relief in imitation of carving. Then there was a mock marble mantel-piece and a huge cabinet and accessories, all looking very solid and forming apparently the entire side of a room. When Mr. Gibson, however, proceeded, without great effort, to lift the whole thing, it appeared that all was made of paper, and it was explained that it was for use behind the curtain of the Madison Square Theatre. The stage, certainly, would seem to be the only proper place for paper furniture. At a distance it looks very natural, and it is very easily moved, which is an important consideration behind the scenes. We were informed, however, of a new and more practical use for papier-maché, and that was for ceilings, in place of plaster. Mr. Gibson explained that it does away with the need of lath and plaster, it costs no more, and, being very light, there is no danger of its falling, as plaster often does, by its own weight. Recently part of the ceiling of the old Huguenot church in Charleston fell, and he has satisfactorily repaired the damage by supplying papier-maché in place of the plaster. The papier-maché is moulded to look like the latter, and Mr. Gibson says no one, by simply looking at the ceiling, could distinguish the difference.

According to an English newspaper, the application of paper has been carried to a far greater extent at the Sydney Exhibition. A house in it has been built of, and furnished with, that material. The exterior is moulded in carton-pierre, while the interior is covered with the same material, being plain on the floor, forming splendid arabesques on the walls, and moulded in imitation of plaster on the ceilings. The doors, cupboards, and shelves are of the same material, while the entire furniture, including chandeliers and a stove, in which a fire can be lighted, is made of papier-maché. The carpets and curtains are of paper, and there is a bedroom in which there is not only a large bed made of papier-maché, but there are also blankets, sheets, quilts, and female underclothing, dresses and bonnets, in the latest style, composed solely of carton-pâte. It is proposed to give a series of banquets in this building, in

which the plates, dishes, knives, forks, and glasses will all be of paper. All this is far ahead of the Gibsons. They must look to their laurels.

#### BOW-LEGGED FURNITURE.

THE stupid practice of cutting wood across the grain in the manufacture of legs, chairs, tables, and sofas, which one might have hoped was obsolete, but which has come into fashion again, calls forth the following remarks from The London Furniture Gazette:

"If wood is cut with the grain it is comparatively strong, and if against the grain it is comparatively weak, and a piece of wood which would be, if cut with the grain, sufficiently strong for the leg of a useful chair, would prove altogether useless as a chair leg if cut across the grain; indeed, with many woods the leg would have to be four times the thickness if cut across the grain that would be required were it cut in the direction of the 'vessels' of the tree-stem. In order, then, that we may use the wood in the simplest, best, and most economical manner, it is necessary that we cut it in the direction of the grain, and use it as far as possible in straight pieces. Yet how frequently do we find chairs with bowed legs—legs cut against the grain! Such legs have grown in favor recently, since abortions of this character were general in the days of Queen Anne, and this Queen Anne revival has brought them again into use. Man is a creature endowed with reason, and it is *reason* that makes him nobler than the brute; yet he constantly acts as though he possessed no powers by which he can discriminate between right and wrong. Reason at once tells us that it is absurd to waste wood, and that it is stupid not to use it in such a manner as will give to our seats strength and durability, especially when this happens to be the cheapest method of making the material, and when no beauty is gained by any departure from what is obviously right. Yet, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason, we copy ugly chairs from a bygone age, which are formed in a manner that we know to be wrong."

The subject is one which we have often touched upon, but so long as it continues fashionable—hateful word!—to have these bow-legged monstrosities, there is no reason to hope that any remonstrance from the press will avail in the matter. Quite recently a prominent New York dealer in "antique furniture" pointed out to us with pride a set of body-bulged and bow-legged mahogany from an old house on the Hudson, and deliberately avowed his intention of perpetrating several replicas of it with smart new brass fittings, which we do not doubt he will readily dispose of at fancy prices. What a conscience a man must have who will in cold blood proceed to resuscitate a lie in wood which has been dead more than a hundred years!

#### CARPET DYES.

THROUGH a curious misapprehension, the impression got abroad last spring that arsenic was used in the coloring of Kidderminster carpets, and the Foreign Secretary of the Swedish Government wrote to some English carpet manufacturers that any textile fabrics introduced into Sweden containing arsenic would, on detection, be liable to condemnation. The Warehousemen's and Drapers' Trade Journal emphatically denies that British carpets contain arsenical dye, and in order that the public may be sure of this, it briefly states what dyes and chemicals are used in the trade. Blacks, so much in favor of late years, are produced with logwood in some form or other. Browns with cudbear, which is orchella weed, found on the sea-shore, ground up. Yellows are made with chipped fustic, which is a wood grown in South America; also with flavine. Reds are made with cochineal, which, as everybody knows, is an insect. Blues, with indigo or aniline dye, made from tar. White is simply the natural color of the worsted bleached. Among the other commodities used are bichrome, tartar, madder (a root), ammonia, sulphate of soda, oxalic acid, alum, roll sulphur, turmeric, and gambier, and there is not one of these substances that, when dyed into worsted, is in any way dangerous to human life. Where arsenic is employed as a coloring agent, it is generally used for greens or whites, but this does not apply to carpets, as the greens are produced with fustic and indigo, and the white, as stated above, is simply the natural color of the fabric.